



# MICHIGAN MESSENGER

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## President's Report

By Gary Van Hoogstraten  
President

A lot has transpired since our last paper, but the agenda seems to be the same. The Postal Commission is still meeting and we can only hope for the best. I have read the minutes from the last couple meetings and here are some things I have noticed. The Co-Chair of the Committee states the focus of the meeting was the Postal Service's workforce and the collective bargaining process. He also states that the Commission's recommendations, if accepted, could have an impact on Postal Service employees and their families. One of the Commissioners also stated the committee is considering the Postal Service's collective bargaining and dispute resolutions processes, as well as, reviewing alternative models. I for one would like to know what their alternatives are. A representative from the Postal Service, Anthony Vegliante, says that there has been a decrease of 60,000 employees since 1999 and that the Postal Service plans to reduce the workforce by an additional 40,000 over the next three years. When he was questioned as to whether an early retirement would encourage the wrong people to retire? He stated that the early retirement should look "into the right people retiring from the right spots." Does that mean that the Postal Service will offer early retirement selectively by areas? That's what it sounds like. There was another person from the Postal Service wanting to recommend that the collective

bargaining agreement should contain a period of mandatory mediation. This would include a mediator that would become the neutral

chair of a three-member board, which would conduct interest arbitration if resolution cannot be reached. The major problem I can personally see with this last idea, is that management doesn't come to the table now, what would make them do it then? If it was through the court system or whatever, they have all these high priced lawyers there to tell them this. This person also stated that the retiree's health care and pensions should be subject of collective bargaining. The retirees have contributed so much to working for all those years and now they want to punish them. A representative from the NALC was quoted saying that there has to be a better relationship between management and the unions. Professor Goldberg told the commission that collective bargaining works and that it should be maintained. One of the representatives from the Postal Service was talking about the structure of the Postal Service stated that managerial levels have been decreased but in the wrong levels. A representative from the Postal Service was also quoted that the Postal Service is working to increase the number of (CPU's) Contract

Postal Units. They plan on installing 2,500 in grocery stores, lobbies, and malls by FY 2003. Does this mean that the number of employees will be reduced by these figures? A representative from the National Association of private mailers was quoted that pick-up and delivery services should remain with the Postal Service, but processing and transportation should be handled by the private sector. Does this mean privatization? Sounds like it to me. Last, but not least, was a statement from a person from the private sector and a concerned citizen. She became engaged some 14 years ago after hearing from a friend of management's behavior towards their employees. She was quoted that some managers attitudes were so inhumane that they fit in a brutal dictatorship rather than in America. She told of a former Postmaster reporting his experience with management training at a Postal Service school in Tennessee. He described how the role playing strategies used there resulted in the trainees naming the school as "Hate and Intimidation Universities." She described a situation in Boynton, Florida where a Supervisor followed an employee with a stopwatch and pad of paper recording every move this employee made. He was so close to this employee that she could feel him breathing down her neck. This conduct was so intimidating and provocative that this employee had to be removed by ambulance to a local hospital. Many other employees at this Post Office complained about the

(Continued on page 10)



## Secretary's Writings

By Harold Juhl  
Executive Secretary



## Education at Work

By Lynn Pallas-Barber  
Director of Education and Research

### STATE EDUCATIONAL CONVENTION

The MPWU recently held our Educational Convention on Mackinac Island. I want to commend Lynn Pallas-Barber for a great job putting together the training sessions that were presented to everyone who attended. I heard nothing but positive comments on the classes and the instructors who presented the materials. We had a great turn out and with everything that was learned, the Locals around the state should be better prepared to represent our membership. Thanks to all of the State Officers who helped out with the shirt sales, registration, and the hospitality room. A special thanks goes to Diane Radischat, for coming in from Seattle to assist in the retirement training. I hope that everyone who attended had a good time. The next State Convention will be held in Lansing in April 2004, and my Local (CMAL) will be the Hosting Local.

### DISTRICT MEETINGS

The next scheduled District Meeting is going to be held in Gaylord and will be sometime in September of 2003. Future meetings will be in February 2004 in Grand Rapids, and in the fall of 2004 in Traverse City.

### EXCESSING IN AO's

I recently attended a meeting in Grand Rapids with other Presidents from the area. The A/Manager, Human Resources Nancy Rettinhouse, and Manager, Labor Relations Barb Kiehborth, were also present for this meeting. Nancy Rettinhouse called the meeting to give the Union information on the Function 4's that were performed in the different offices and how it is having a large effect on the hours of work for the clerks in those AO's. We were also informed that there is going to be excessing in these AO's and management wanted us to be aware of that. More information will be coming soon and it will be put out to the affected Offices, as it becomes available.

### STATE MAINTENANCE CRAFT DIRECTOR POSITION

I want to welcome Jane Duggan our new Maintenance Craft Director on board. The State President, Gary VanHoogstraten made the selection to fill the vacant position at the Executive Board Meeting while we were in Mackinac. I believe that Jane will do an excellent job for the State in that position. Welcome aboard Jane.

*(Continued on page 10)*

### THANK YOU! THANK YOU!

My THANKS to all who helped make the MPWU Educational Conference a great success! With my brief stay at Mackinac Island the continued duties of completing the conference were left to all my fellow MPWU state officers. It is my understanding that several people pitched in and the final tasks were completed with out a glitch. The task of getting all the certificates done and the last minute issues were all accomplished. As I have said many, many times it takes a combined effort to organize and present a conference of that size. THANK YOU ALL!!

### AFL-CIO SUPPORTS A DEPENDABLE, AFFORDABLE AND UNIVERSALLY AVAILABLE U.S. POSTAL SERVICE.

The following action was taken by the Executive Council of the AFL-CIO on February 27, 2003 in Hollywood, FL.:

WHEREAS continued access to affordable mail service that reached every corner of the nation and the world is of vital importance to all Americans; and

WHEREAS the president has named a commission that may recommend drastic changes in U.S. mail services, which could include increased costs, reduced access and curtailed services; and

WHEREAS the United States has the most dependable and affordable Postal Service in the world, but it is at risk from this initiative; and

WHEREAS rural, inner-city and senior Americans depend on a high caliber mail service and have few practical alternatives; and

WHEREAS millions of Americans, particularly those who are economically disadvantaged or older, do not have access to the Internet, electronic transfers and electronic bill paying, and any change to the Postal Service that affects the continued availability of affordable mail service for all citizens will further erode their economic security; and

WHEREAS continuation of six-days-a-week mail delivery is of paramount importance to those who rely on the mails for the delivery of essential documents and packages such as medicines, checks and other communications; and

*(Continued on page 10)*



## Long and Short of It

By Michael Long  
Editor

When last I sat down and wrote my article for the Michigan Messenger, we just declared war on Iraq, the planning stages for the Educational Convention were underway, and management, along with the Postal Commission was the biggest pain in our side. Well, now it is two months later, and I guess two out of three it isn't bad. To our union brother and sisters who have returned from the war in Iraq, I would like to say Thank You for a job well done in making our world a little safer. Only thing that makes me not to run out and celebrate is that the Postal Commission is due to make its recommendation in July; and management is still the biggest pain in our side.

At the Associate Offices I have contact with, things haven't changed at all. Postmasters are continuing to do the jobs of clerks; and the clerks hours and livelihood are being cut. I can not stress enough to everyone out there; if you feel that management is doing your job, file a grievance. If you are being told their isn't any work for you, yet, it is being given to a sub, rural, carrier, or worse yet, a manager/postmaster, file a grievance. Even though it might take a while for us to win that grievance, when we do, and the majority of times we do (as long as it is documented), it makes the Postal Service stop and think what they are doing. In our office, we have always made jokes that the only way to make the Postal Service stop what they are doing is to hit them in the pocket book. They don't care about who does the job, but when they start forking out all this money, they will begin to.

### 2003 Educational Convention

I would like to thank everyone that attended the recently held Educational Convention at Mission Point Resort on Mackinac Island. It is because of you that this convention was a resounding success. From the attendees, the instructors, the officers in attendance, and the hotel itself, everything seemed to run like clockwork. A big thanks goes out to Lynn Pallas-Barber for another outstanding accomplishment. Look for pictures of this year's convention in this edition of the Messenger. In addition, due to the amount of work that went into this convention, I was unable to get out the CD to anyone that wanted them before we left on Sunday. If you would like a copy of the pictures taken up at the Educational Convention, please drop me an e-Mail, and I will put one in the mail to you.

### Upcoming Training's

The Postal Press Association will be holding its biennial  
*(Continued on page 11)*



## Injury Comp Report

By Ron Krumrie  
Human Relations/Injury Compensation Director

### 2003 Educational Convention

I would like to thank all the brothers and sisters who attended the 2003 Educational Convention. It was a huge success. I would also like to thank the National Officers who where able to attend. I know I always learn new things at these functions.

I have seen a lot old of friends along with many new faces. It's great to see more new people step up and become involved. The battles we will face as a union in the very near future has possibly never been greater. Now is the time for **all of us** to step up and contribute.

It was great to see such a great turnout in my OWCP class. I hope that each of you were able to take something new back to your locals to share with our brothers and sisters. **Knowledge is Power- Use It and Share It.**

### The Battle Continues

In December 2002 on the APWU web site, Sue Carney listed five new items on the Injury Compensation page. In the last two Michigan Messengers, I have shared four of these with you. This is the last of the new items Sue has listed on the web site, it is a letter Sue sent out to all Local and State Presidents about her concerns with this so called reassessment initiative.

I am sure these won't be the last of these letters as MGMT continues to attack the ill and injured work force. We will continue to fight these blatant attacks on our ill and injured work force, and I will continue to share with you all information that I get it. **Knowledge is Power- Use IT and Share IT.**

### LIMITED DUTY AND REHABILITATION JOB RE-ASSESSMENT INITIATIVE

Earlier this year the Postal Service implemented a ""Limited Duty (LDC 68)and Rehabilitation (LDC 69) Reassessment Initiative"". Several months ago, after receiving information regarding this program from the field, we requested a briefing at the Headquarters' level on this initiative. The Post Service recently provided us with that briefing. They stated that their program is not intended to relieve them of their responsibility to find productive assignments for employees who can physically return to work. Quoted below are their specific objectives:

*(Continued on page 12)*



## Legislative Update

By Cynthia D. Hardison  
Legislative Director

The MPWU Educational Convention was held at the beautiful Mission Point Resort on Mackinac Island, May 1-3, 2003. A big THANK YOU goes out to the Director of Education, Lynn Pallas-Barber on yet another outstanding job that she did putting this conference together. There was nothing but rave reviews from some of the members that I spoke with, the classes were very educational and informative.

I am proud to report that the money collected for COPA at this State Conference was in the amount of \$1,596.00. Kudos to everyone who gave to COPA. This is a critical time in postal history, and we all need as much support from Congress as we can get, contributing to COPA will help us in this effort. The struggle strongly continues.

Here are a few tips on writing to your legislator and some tips on lobbying, this information was provided by the Michigan State AFL-CIO:

### **Tips On Lobbying**

You can have more impact on how your legislator votes in Lansing than a whole team of corporate lobbyist. That is because you live and vote in your legislator's district and is his or her job to represent you. Lawmakers need to be told first-hand by union activists' back home in their districts what issues working families are concerned about. Whether it be face-to-face meeting, or by letter, or telephone call, your personal contact with your elected representatives is the key to labor being able to advance a pro-worker agenda at the State Capitol.

With the legislature considering proposal to repeal prevailing and living wages, and laws to enact "paycheck deception" to limit the voice of working families in the political process, your participation is needed now more than ever before. Everything that labor has gained both legislatively and at the bargaining table is now at state.

The follow guidelines were developed to help you succeed at influencing public policy through grass roots lobbying. Some of these helpful hints will seem obvious to you. Others are the more subtle techniques practiced by the professional lobbyists. These tips are grouped under five general categories: Preparation, Precision, Professionalism, Politeness, and Perseverance.

*(Continued on page 15)*



## Maintenance Memo

By Jane Duggan  
Maintenance Director

Allow me to introduce myself. At the recent State Educational Conference on Mackinac Island, MPWU President, Gary VanHoogstraten, appointed me to the position of MPWU Maintenance Director. I am very honored for this vote of confidence and hope to live up to everyone's expectations.

I joined the maintenance craft in May 1988 having worked previously as a manual distribution clerk and city carrier. I came in as a Mechanic's Helper and then worked as level 5, 6, 7 and now 8 in the MPE section. I have been a maintenance craft steward since January 1989 and have served as chief steward for maintenance and assistant craft director in the Detroit District Area Local. For the last five years, I have been the APWU's designated coordinator for maintenance developmental training, more popularly known as the Pilot Program.

Since I am part of a very large local, we decided to divide up some of the responsibilities. I have put my efforts into training and have specialized in step placement and other pay related issues in the grievance arbitration system. I look forward to serving our craft in the state organization and to trying to keep us all up to speed on how the rapidly changing postal world specifically affects our craft.

### **OPEN SEASON**

As you are undoubtedly aware, we are in the midst of "Open Season". This is a contractually mandated opportunity for maintenance craft members to take any/all of the maintenance tests both MSS and non-MSS once every three years. You can only apply for exams you have not previously taken in-craft.

This year's timeline calls for interviews in May-June, testing in June-July and all results due no later than August 29<sup>th</sup>. Offices will vary in the timetable depending on the number of applicants and other local factors. At the conclusion of the process all stewards and members will want to check the resulting Promotion Eligibility Registers (PERs) for accuracy.

### **CRAFT CONFERENCE**

I am a delegate to the national maintenance craft conference May 18-20 in Philadelphia PA. I will be writing a report on that conference for the next issue. Personally, I find the annual craft conference to be the most useful source of infor-

*(Continued on page 17)*



## Area 6 Report

By Mary Stephenson  
Area 6 Director

On May 1 -3, 2003, I attended the State Educational Convention on Mackinac Island. Even though the weather didn't want to co-operate, the classes were a success. It was great to have so many experienced officers and stewards gathered together to teach and learn from their shared experiences.

I want to thank everyone who bought raffle tickets to help support our efforts to provide the National with COPA funds. The COPA funds will help strengthen our ability to support those political representatives who still believe in Unions and the working men and women in our country. We raised over \$1,500 through the convention attendees' generous support.

One of the discussions of special interest to me, as the Area 6 Director, was the availability of underemployment payments through the MESC (Michigan Employment Security Commission). If you are a PTF in an associate office and your hours have been cut, you might be eligible for this benefit. Call your nearest MESC office for further information on eligibility and the documentation necessary to file a claim.

A final thanks to our National officers for their time and support, from Sharon Stone's stirring rendition of "God Bless America" to Roy Braunstein's legislative update.

In Solidarity,

*Mary*



## Area 9 Report

By Jennifer Gilbert  
Area 9 Director

Greetings Brothers and Sisters,

It is with great sadness that I mourn the death of a great father and dedicated union man, Jim Sweeney. Our union brother Jim was one of the best and brightest fighters for worker's rights. Jim was also one of the most caring and loving fathers I have ever known. One could feel the pride and joy he felt as he relayed every accomplishment, every milestone in his son Jeffrey, and his daughter, Erin's lives. For those who may not have known him he was the former MPWU Special Delivery Director and Retirement Counseling trainer.

Jim's infectious laugh will forever ring in the air of the work-room floor, the union office, and hallways of convention hotels where one could tell he was on his way well before he arrived. No words can ever express the loss we feel and the void in our lives by our dear friend's departure. May he rest in peace.

As the summer months approach, there is more talk of 60-day letters being sent to Associate office employees. These letters are actually an involuntary detail from the office where domiciled to another associate office with a deficit in staffing needs. If any employee receives a 60-day notice of an involuntary detail, please contact your Union representative as soon as possible to ensure the timely filing of any grievance

Also, if you have been displaced due to postmasters or OICs performing bargaining unit work then you need to let us know. We will be fighting the district on this and any other mismanagement strategy to reduce bargaining unit employee hours. It is important to keep accurate records related to travel between associate offices, the average number of hours worked each week in each office, and whether or not there are other non-APWU craft employees such as mail carriers performing any clerk duties.

Annual leave issues continue to be a problem in several offices. If you have a problem with annual leave remember that any leave you have approved will carry over with you into the new office. Don't let your supervisor bully you into changing your leave selection to suit their needs. If you have the time approved, then it's yours and not at their discretion to change it or revert it. As always, speak up for your rights and keep the union strength alive!

In Solidarity,

*Jennifer*

**APWU**  
**APWU**

**Now is the time to sign up  
that non-member!**





## Retiree Involvement

By Al LaBrecque  
State Retirees Chapter President

A-h-h-h-h...Spring! Nature renewing itself, and so am I. I recently underwent a total knee replacement. This caused me to miss the MPWU State Education Convention, but it also gave me plenty of time to ponder Retirees Department issues. State Chapter officers attending the Convention gave it high marks for Retirement Counseling class being instructed by Diane Radischat from Seattle Washington and James Sweeney, and the Legislation class put on by APWU Legislative Director Roy Braunstein and MPWU Legislative Director Cynthia Hardison.

Lying on my back for a couple of weeks allowed me to zero in on the more pressing issues which I view as in need of being addressed! Now that I am able to get to my desk for a couple of hours at a time, I am able to commit those thoughts to paper. The first item is at the top of my "list:"

I just received a copy of the amended 2002 APWU Constitution & By-Laws. As with the 2000 amended version, I was disappointed, but not surprised to find that a 2000 amendment to Article 16, Section 2(h); "APWU Retiree Chapter Jurisdiction" had once again been omitted. Beginning in early 2002, when it was discovered this amendment has been omitted from the 2000 Constitution (amended), I have been attempting to correct this error. I first discussed it with Exec VP Cliff Guffey and Retirees Dept. John R. Smith. Both acknowledged the omission claiming it had been "inadvertently omitted" when transcribed from the official convention proceedings by an APWU staff employee. I took that explanation at face value.

In March 2002, I followed up with a letter of inquiry to Sec. Treas. Tunstall. I received no reply. During subsequent discussion via phone with both Dir. Smith and Tunstall, I was told that because OPM and Merkle Press administers the membership lists. Because of this, assigning a retired member's membership and dues rebate to the home Local Retiree Chapter when residing in another zip code jurisdiction could not be accomplished. I differed with that assessment.

The specific language of Resolution #68, 2000 Constitution Committee Report, as amended per the Convention Official Proceedings, pages 171-173, is as follows: "...establishing APWU Retirees Department membership jurisdiction procedures which allow a retired member residing outside the zip code representation jurisdiction of their home Local from which they retired, the option of assigning their Local Retiree Chapter membership and forty percent (40%) annual dues

*(Continued on page 17)*

## Do You Have a Cell Phone? You Might Be Paying Too Much!

That is right. You might be paying too much for your cell phone plan. Does this sound like one of those bad commercials, or worse yet, a telemarketer? The only problem, it's true. Many Postal employees out there have no idea that the United States Postal Service has "arrangements" with various Cellular/Wireless providers to provide their service at a discount to you, the Postal employee.

This last week, I came across a recent edition of the USPS Link. Inside was a number to call for discounts on Verizon Wireless. Since that is the service I personally use, I gave them a call. Turns out, the discount is for up to 25% off your monthly access fee, just for being a Postal Worker. It also is 25% off accessories when placed using their 1-800#.

And it doesn't stop there, there are other companies out there offering you a deal also. All you have to do is....ask!

I attempted to contact most of the cellular companies in Michigan to find which ones offer a discount or don't. If you find any other plans that offer discounts to the Postal employee, please let me know and I will update the list on the website.

*Mike*

Verizon - 1-866-378-1535 (Discount is good for plans \$35.00 and more (does not include Share Plans))

NexTel - 1-888-242-4190

AT&T - 1-877-632-1964

Cingular - 1-800-356-9752 (New Customer)  
1-866-246-4852, Option 1 (Current Customers)

Sprint - Does not offer a discount.

T-Mobile - Does not offer a discount.

Centennial Wireless - Did not respond to inquiry

ALLTel - Did not respond to inquiry

NPI - Did not respond to inquiry

Cellular One - Did not respond to inquiry.

NOTE: This information is what I received by calling and/or sending an e-Mail to their corporate office. To verify amount of discount, you will need to contact your carrier directly. If and when I receive a response from one of these carriers; or when I am notified that something has changed, I will post the information on the website.

***Sample Letter to Legislators  
For Use by Postal Workers (Short Version)***

The Honorable \_\_\_\_\_  
U.S. Senate/House of Representatives

Dear Senator/Representative \_\_\_\_\_:

I am writing to you about a matter of serious concern to all Americans.

The President's Commission on the US Postal Service, appointed in December 2002, is considering a major overhaul of the nation's mail system. In a report due to President Bush by July 31, the commission could recommend drastic changes in mail service – changes that would result in increased postage costs, curtailed services for individuals and small business, and restriction on collective bargaining for postal employees.

I am concerned that such changes would have a devastating effect on the mission of the Postal Service. Which is: to bind our nation together by providing service and access to all – the residents of rural areas and inner cities, the elderly, communities both rich and poor, and the business that serve them.

As a postal employee, I am worried about any changes that would weaken the Postal Service, which plays such an important role in American life. I urge you to evaluate the effect any proposals would have on postal service to the nation, or the institution itself, and on postal workers.

Changes contemplated by the commission could have a negative effect on service for Michigan residents. These could include closing “unprofitable” post offices in rural areas and in inner-city communities, discontinuing six-day delivery, and ending universal service at uniform rates.

The cost of postage could skyrocket, just as telephone rates and cable TV fees have, since those industries were deregulated. Consumers could be forced to pay different amounts, depending on where they live and where they send their mail, and complicate payment plans could replace uniform rates. Large businesses and advertisers could be granted preferential rates at the expense of small businesses and ordinary citizens.

The changes being considered by the commission could jeopardize the future of the institution that has served our country for 227 years. They could endanger the vast network that unites our nation, and serves individuals and commerce without regard to their economic status or location.

The privacy and security of citizens' mailboxes could be jeopardized if the commission recommends privatizing or “commercializing” the Postal Service by letting private businesses process and deliver the mail. Mail could be abandoned if private mail companies go out of business. Recent steps to secure the postal network from acts of terrorism could be rendering meaningless if the postal network is compromised.

More than 600,000 postal employees could lose the right to collective bargaining. We could suffer a loss of wages, a reduction in health and retirement benefits, and a loss of job security.

I urge you to keep track of the commission's progress and to consider my concerns when Congress debates postal reform legislation.

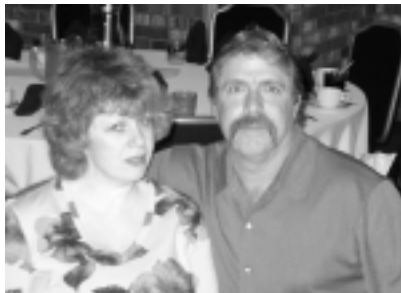
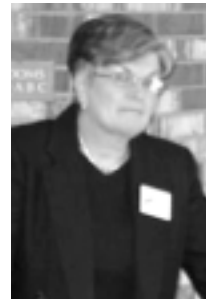
Thank you for your interest and consideration.

Sincerely,

(Provide name and address)

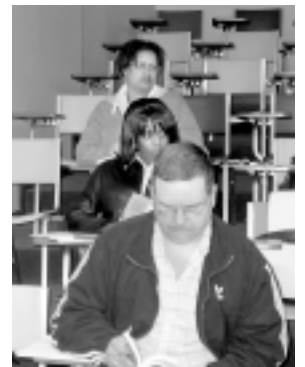


1st Annual Central Region Human Relations Conference  
February 19th through 21st, 2003  
Holiday Inn, Midland, Michigan





16th Biennial MPWU Educational Convention  
May 1st through 3rd, 2003  
Mission Point Resort, Mackinac Island, Michigan



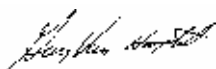
President's Report Continued

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hostile environment, but nothing was done about it. In fact, this Manager was promoted and received an award. I know that this is not the issue in all offices, but it does exist. President Burrus testified on behalf of the union members to the commission. He stated the most fundamental right of the union is the right to bargain about wages and working conditions. The second is the right to a prompt and effective resolution of any dispute that may result from collective bargaining. We have to keep our right to collective bargaining and if not we are in a world of hurt. The commission will submit its findings and recommendations in July and we will have to wait the outcome. I can only hope for all of us that it comes out for the best for all Union Members of the American Postal Workers Union.

The MPWU State Educational Convention took place May 1<sup>st</sup> – 3<sup>rd</sup>. I would like to say that the entire Executive Board of the Michigan Postal Workers Union stepped up to make this Convention a huge success. With every convention, there were some minor problems but nothing that we could not overcome. Lynn Pallas-Barber did an excellent job in preparing this Convention for us and she should be commended for this. I will not take any time to individually thank some because I know that I will forget someone. All I have to do is say THANK YOU to each and every one of you. All of you know what you did to make this Convention a success and I appreciate it. We are in the process of setting up our next District Meeting in the Gaylord Area, to be held during September. Harold Juhl and I are also in the final planning of the 2004 Constitutional Convention to be held in Lansing. There are still a few details to be worked out, but we have to look at the entire membership of the Michigan Postal Workers Union before we sign the bottom line. By the time this edition of the Michigan Messenger comes out, summer will be just around the corner, I wish all of you well during this time, and enjoy a safe and fun summer.

Until Next Time,



Executive Secretary's Report Continued

(Continued from page 2)

UPDATED MAILING LISTS/SUPPLIES

Every State officer should have received a new and improved mailing list. If you did not receive it please let me know and I will make sure you get one. I just ordered more supplies, so if you need letterhead, envelopes, or vouchers please contact me and I will get them to you.

STATE T-SHIRTS

To all Local Presidents, we have T-shirts left from the State Convention and if you would like to get some of them to sell to your members of your Local please contact me and I will get them to you. We have short sleeve shirts (med., lg., xl, xxl, xxxl) and long sleeve shirts (med., lg, xl, xxl). Costs of shirts are \$15.00 for the short sleeve shirts and \$17.00 for the long sleeve shirts. We also have extra blue bags left over if you would like some of those for your local officers, stewards, or members.

In closing, I would like to urge all of our members to seek out the non-members and talk with them and suggest to them to join us and become members of one of the greatest unions around today. Remember that strength comes in numbers! One last thing is that summer is near and the nice weather is finally approaching, enjoy it along with your families and be safe.

In Solidarity,

*Harold*

Legislative Update Continued

(Continued from page 2)

WHEREAS some advocates of change in the Postal Service also advocate privatization of the Postal Service, but, for Americans in rural areas and for many in inner cities as well, a profit motive cannot support provisions of essential services; and

WHEREAS the Postal Service employees hundreds of thousands of women, military veterans, African Americans and other minorities, and for many of these people, the fact that the Postal Service provides a living wage and adequate fringe benefits has been critically important. In the private sector of our economy, there remains an unfortunate disparity between the employment opportunities and compensation available to these workers compared to others. Any effort to dismantle the Postal Service would, therefore, be a regressive step, contrary to our national effort to provide equal employment opportunities for minorities, women and veterans;

WHEREAS the Postal Service, with more than 600,000 workers in its bargaining units, is the nation's largest employer of unionized labor and its employees enjoy the right to engage in free collective bargaining; therefore, it is hereby **RESOLVED**, that the AFL-CIO and its affiliates

(Continued on page 11)

### Legislative Update Continued

(Continued from page 10)

believe that the provision of affordable, dependable postal service to all Americans is and must remain the responsibility of our government. We oppose any change that would favor the supposed efficiency of private markets over protecting the public interest in maintaining dependable and affordable postal communications among all Americans. Further, we oppose any change that would threaten the economic security or collective bargaining rights of the employees of the U.S. Postal Service.

This action taken by the AFL-CIO Executive Council certainly is a sure sign of the threat to our livelihood. It's time for us as postal workers to take some positive action to protect our jobs and our collective bargaining. It's time to stop the apathy. It's time to get all postal workers united. It's time to get the non-members to join our ranks.

### CONTRIBUTIONS TO COPA

More now than ever it is extremely important that we contribute to COPA. Our future will be decided in Congress. We must arm our national union with the necessary monetary contributions to put up a good fight. The President's Commission on the U.S. Postal Service and proposal for postal reform legislation is a direct attack on our jobs and livelihood. Our congressional representatives use funds to ensure their livelihood and terms in Congress. It is now our turn to contribute funds which will prolong our jobs and collective bargaining as we know it. I personally have committed to have \$10.00 a PP taken from my checking account. What have you contributed?

Our national union asks, "Is your job worth the price of a stamp?" It is imperative that each member contributes at least \$.37 a PP to our COPA fund, the union's Committee on Political Action.

Remember your future is at stake!

### MPWU MAINTENANCE CRAFT DIRECTOR

A warm WELCOME to Jane Duggan our new Maintenance Craft Director. I am confident that she will do an excellent job and will be a welcomed addition to the Executive Board of the MPWU.

Until next time,

In solidarity



### Long and Short of It Continued

(Continued from page 3)

Convention in Milwaukee, Wisconsin from July 30<sup>th</sup> through August 4<sup>th</sup>. If you are an Editor, or an Associate Editor, make plans to be there.

The next District Meeting will be in Gaylord, Michigan in September; with another one in February in Grand Rapids.

### Summertime Fun, Saving Money, and Lifecare

With summer fast approaching and many of us will be on the road traveling around the area or the country, don't forget to use the two major benefits you have as a Postal Workers and APWU Member: 1. Your Postal Id; and 2. Lifecare. Your Postal Id can sometimes save you up to 50% and more at some hotels. In conjunction with this, as an APWU member, Lifecare is available to you to give you the information you need. Lifecare is a free service to the APWU members. It was negotiated in the previous contract and if we don't start to use it, we will lose it. They are there for you 24-hours a day, 7-days a week. It is like having your own personal assistant when you need one. You want instructions on how to get somewhere? Give them a call. You want to know where a good place to eat or what hotel has the best amenities and prices? Give them a call.

For those of you that have kids going into college, give them a call. They can scour all the available scholarships out there for your child and send you all the available information. This is just the tip of the iceberg in what they have to offer. Check them out at Lifecare.com or give them a call: 800-873-4636 (or TTY: 800-873-1322). NOTE: This service is only available to APWU members in APWU represented crafts. If you are a member of the APWU, but you are a carrier, or mail handler, unfortunately, this service is unavailable to you.

### Website

If you know of anything you would like to see on this state's website, please let me know. If your local is having a summer picnic or anything and would like to put it on the Calendar of Events, please e-Mail or write to me the information and I will be more than happy to put it on.

In closing, I hope everyone gets out and enjoys this beautiful weather. Keep in mind though, even if it is nice outside, don't forget to attend your own local's General Membership Meetings. Your voice and input are important to your local and the way it is run. The membership is the highest-ranking body in the union. Without you, there is no union.

Yours in Solidarity,

*Mike*

**\*\* Review the current status of employees in LDC 68/69 and determine if they are currently in the appropriate position based on current medical information.**

**\*\* Identify meaningful, productive work in the Postal Service that will ensure that resources are optimized.**

**\*\* Develop strategies to outplace employees to positions outside the Postal Service.**

In regards to this last objective regarding "outplacement", the Postal Service stated that their intention is to focus on employees who are on the long term disability rolls of OWCP and who are expected to never be medically able to return to Postal Service employment.

There are two principle form letters that have been created by Postal Service Headquarters for use with this program. One letter is for the employee and attached to it is another letter for the employee to give to their physician. The employee's letter asks for the information to be provided within 14 days and makes the veiled threat that failure to provide it "may result in termination of your limited duty assignment". While we expressed our reservations to the Postal Service regarding the tenor and wording of these form letters, it is our conclusion that the Postal Service's request for current medical information does not violate any contractual or regulatory language. Additionally, the Postal Service made the commitment that these letters would only be sent to those employees whose injury compensation files do not contain the requested current medical information, and that this initiative is not to be used to harass injured employees.

Applicable Federal Regulations establish that "the employer may monitor the employee's medical progress and duty status by obtaining periodic medical reports." Therefore, this request for updated medical information is not improper on its face, and we would expect an employee to make a good faith effort to comply. As the letter instructs, if there is going to be a delay in the physician's response, then the employee should contact his or her immediate supervisor. An employee should not be overly concerned with the Postal Service's threat regarding "termination of your limited duty assignment" as long as the requested medical documentation is provided in a reasonably timely manner.

It is important to note that this request for medical information by the Postal Service is not a fitness for duty exam. The physician's bill would be submitted to OWCP. In addition, employees may request mileage reimbursement (using Form SF1012) and/or wage loss compensation (using Form CA7) if they take LWOP (they may use leave if they choose to).

It is our opinion that critical issues may arise later when the Postal Service begins to act on the medical information which they have requested. Therefore, we will continue to monitor the situation. If the updated medical information is used in an

inappropriate manner such activity should be brought to our attention. Each suspected impropriety will be evaluated based on its unique fact circumstances.

Anyone who has been affected should ensure that the local union officials send all the facts to Sue so it can be addressed at the national level.

### **The Truth and Nothing But The Truth**

I read this on the web site and felt compelled to share it with you. This is the testimony of Thelma A Dowies before the Postal Commission at the resent hearings which where held in Chicago, Illinois. Read her testimony and see if it sounds familiar, either from your own experiences or someone you know. Unfortunately I have talked to numerous brothers and sisters who could themselves be one of Thelma A. Dowies many examples. Just remember you could be the next example we talk about.

### **Testimony of Thelma A. Dowies' Statement on the Workforce in the U.S. Postal Service, April 29, 2003 Meeting Chicago, Illinois**

My name is Thelma A. Dowies. I do not represent any organization or business. I am a concerned citizen who has been investigating many vistas of the U. S. Postal Service's relationship with its workforce. I will give portions of my statement orally but request permission to enter the complete statement in the Record. My background is in Education. I have a Ph.D. in Educational Administration with a minor in Gifted Education from Texas A&M. In addition, I have a Masters in English and Supervision and a BBA in General Business. I have served for over 25 years in education as Principal for both public and private schools, as Director of Federal Programs, and as teacher of upper elementary students. The Commission has explored many topics, all of which are very important and will advance the mission of the Postal Service. But I submit that the Workforce topic is the most important because until the Postal Service settles its workforce problems, few of the other improvements can be maximized. I became engaged in the post office story fourteen years ago quite innocently enough after hearing a relative of mine, who works for the post office, tell chilling stories about postal management's behavior toward their employees. I was incredulous at how the human rights of employees were being violated with apparently no accountability. I wrote to then Postmaster General Runyon, whose representative admitted the culture needed to be changed. It didn't. Years later, after I retired, I felt compelled to investigate to see how extensive the problems were. During three years of research, I found the problems were far-reaching and appeared to be caused by (1) the result of an antiquated management model that guides the executives in establishing goals for the workforce and (2) the Postal Service being accountable to no one. The antiquated management model is

one that treats people as machines with no allowance for human limitations, even those protected by federal laws. Managers receive training to push their workers past their limits in order to reach unrealistic goals. A former assistant postmaster reported on his experience with management training at a Postal Service school in Memphis, Tennessee. He described how the role playing strategies used there resulted in the trainees naming the school, "Hate and Intimidation University." Since he couldn't bring himself to carry out the actions for which he was being trained, he chose to go back to a craft job. I'm sure there is nothing written in the "University's" instruction guides about teaching the trainees how to bully and intimidate their workforce. Only witnesses' testimonies could prove it. But its tentacles are squeezing the life out of the workforce today in countless post offices across the United States. The "University" was closed about two years ago because of the expense, the trainee said. I have three examples of humiliating and violent abuses that represent only some of the kinds of abuses taking place in post offices in nearly every state. They show an attitude that is so inhumane that they fit in a brutal dictatorship rather than in America. Not only do the targets suffer, but those who observe the abuse suffer, too, with frustration and anger at their own helplessness in stopping it. My first example took place in Boynton Beach, Florida. Gena Salazar, a petite 43-year-old clerk suffered a panic attack from alleged actions taken against her by her supervisor. The actions were allowed by the plant manager down through the local postmaster. Using the kind of tactics taught at the "Hate and Intimidation University," Salazar's supervisor followed her with a stopwatch and pad of paper recording every move she made. He was so close she could feel him breathing down her neck. His conduct was so intimidating and provocative that she had to be moved by ambulance to the hospital. Harassment of her had been going on for nearly a year. It was the second emergency trip to a hospital as a result of stressful conditions at her post office. Many other postal workers complained about the hostile environment. Salazar was not the only one abused, but her situation was the worst. The others signed a petition that read, "We the undersigned are outraged at the treatment of Gena Salazar. We are aware of Gena Salazar's extraordinary character, morals, integrity, and are horrified that management's treatment is permitted to go unpunished in this country." All who signed the petition are being retaliated against as I speak. Salazar's plight was recorded in the Lake Worth Herald's three weekly newspapers in Florida by veteran journalist Leonard Saffir. After the publicity, only then was she allowed to come back to work. She was moved to another Boynton Beach post office and given six weeks of advanced sick leave pay, which is like a loan and must be paid back. The trio involved in the harassment---the Postmaster, the Plant Manager, and the Supervisor---were not held accountable. Apparently, decent treatment of employ-

ees is not required by management. Another article by Saffir provided the information for my second example, a cancer stricken and diabetic postal worker, Jerome Forster. He worked in a Cleveland, Ohio, post office. Since April of 2000 he had been suffering from cancer and diabetes and was undergoing chemotherapy. His medical documentation required him to drink 70 ounces of water a day. Adding that to the effects of the chemo resulted in increased use of the bathroom. His supervisors repeatedly denied him access to a bathroom and drinking water beginning as soon as he came back to work. Two years later after trying to appease the supervisors, he charged them with not allowing him to follow his medical documentation and for harassment when he went to the bathroom. Forster said, "I have been literally tortured by my supervisor and her immediate supervisor, with no help from the plant manager, EAP (employee assistance program), my union and the EEOC (Equal Employment Opportunity Commission) for too long." Numerous times in November Forster was followed to the restroom by the supervisor. One time, she waited just outside of the restroom for 15 minutes until he came out. He asked her what she was doing. She replied, "I wanted to see what you are doing." Forster filed a complaint with the manager of distribution operations. He was told there was a five minute limit on going to the bathroom and by taking any longer would be a "direct threat to his productivity." Forster said one week later when he exited the bathroom, the supervisor kicked a wastebasket over and said, "Use this next time." Forster said, "Why are you doing this to me?" She replied, "Because I can!" Forster's two years of complaints came to a head during a formal mediation session. The supervisor accepted blame for her actions over the last two years at the meeting. That same supervisor was honored by management at the time she was being accused by Forster of torturing him. When he learned of the award, Forster said, "I was being tortured at the same time my supervisor was getting an award and a pay raise. Sort of silly, isn't it?" Forster said, "Now is the first time in nearly two years I am getting water without being hassled." He still had not received any of the agreed upon back pay although two pay periods had passed since the agreement. The system that awarded the supervisor is well known by postal workers. The president of the American Postal Workers Union explained, "Timmons (the supervisor) follows orders very well. It's always that way with the post office. "Higher managers give the orders to the supervisor down to the line supervisor, who takes the brunt if action is needed. Then they are protected. They rewarded her (Timmons) for doing her job." Forster called it "silly." I call it criminal conspiracy, violating Federal Laws regarding civil rights and disability. Jerome Forster died November 18, 2002. He was 44 years old. [Leonard Saffir has written a series of articles chronicling the plight of a small sample of the thousands of postal workers being bullied in post offices across the country. I have provided Mrs. Gallagher with a collection of them.] My third example took place in the Sacramento, California area. Sexual harassment is a major problem in post

(Continued on page 14)

offices. The one in Sacramento was the worst post office case I have ever heard. It involved a very pretty, but shy, single mother of three young boys, Cynthia Stoll. Numerous male coworkers and supervisors asked her, while she was working, to perform sexual acts too embarrassing for me to relate. Another supervisor prevented her from tending to her feminine needs resulting in her total embarrassment on the workroom floor. One of her supervisors, who was obsessed with her, delivered her supposedly lost paycheck to her home and raped her. He pulled this trick repeatedly. Calling the local police did no good. They believed the word of the supervisor when contacting him later. Also, they prefer to let the Postal Police and the Postal Service system handle it. When the harassment became unbearable she fled the workplace and filed an EEO complaint. She tried to commit suicide several times and was put under a psychiatrist's care. He declared her mentally ill due to stress she received at work. The EEO judge declared she was so broken and mentally damaged that she could not protect her rights. He declared that Cynthia was "by far the most compelling witness that has ever appeared before me." Eventually, she won in an appeal to the Ninth Circuit Court. Since the woman was too damaged to go through another trial, no criminal actions were filed against the supervisors or coworkers. The Postal Service settled for an undisclosed amount. What consequences did the supervisors receive? Both were promoted and transferred. The one who raped and beat her eventually went to law school and is now a lawyer. And Cynthia? She still felt, somehow, it must have been her fault.

In conclusion, I recommend two areas be investigated by the Commission if it falls within your mandate. 1. The ramifications of the "Hate and Intimidation University" as they exist today in Post Offices throughout the United States and Puerto Rico. Other Results of the "University" Mentality Sexual harassment cases and other individual and class action lawsuits have cost the Postal Service millions of dollars. Recently, I received EEO case documents from a San Diego postal worker, Barbara Cummings, about her case in which she was awarded \$100,000 plus \$39,000 for her lawyer. She had been verbally sexually harassed unmercifully along with others who over the years had chosen to leave rather than fight. The group of four co-workers and the supervisor had been spewing their venom for years, evidently with the consent of the plant manager and the postmaster. Again, no accountability for any of them. 2. The Marsh Plan: Employee Management Program, Manager/Supervisor Meeting, Disability Strategy Process Installation. It seeks to rid the workforce of injured employees. While the Plan will have nothing in writing that breaks the Federal Disability Laws, the application of it in local post offices results in violations. The Marsh Plan. The injured have been targeted by the Postal Service. It wrote the Marsh Plan that directs local management to "Reduce the number of employees not

performing 'Full Regular Duty'." Financial problems of the Postal Service brought about the idea of a way to rid the agency of what they call "low hanging fruit," meaning the injured are "easy pickings." Even though the Plan states, "Get managers/supervisors to do the right things at the time of injury and throughout the employee's recovery process," it also states, "Starve the Periodic Rolls and reduce the Lost Production Days." Actual practice, as interpreted by local managers, violates Federal Disability Laws. I suspect that bonuses are involved as they are in every goal that comes down the line. It would be instructive to identify how many of the 23,000 employees who left by "attrition" were in the injured limited duty category.

It sure is good to have a Thelma A Dowies on our side, and to see someone fight against these abusive Managers. I have seen first hand how abusive management can be to the ill and injured throughout our great state. Together we can fight this abuse, but first we must know what our rights are. **Knowledge Is Power - Use It and Share It.**

### **Thank You**

I would like to take a moment and say thank you to all the brothers and sisters who have taken the time to say thanks. I have received numerous thank you cards and even a few Christmas cards from you in the last couple of years. The cards are greatly appreciated yet not necessary, again I would like to thank each and everyone of you. It has been my pleasure to help you. I only wish the need for my assistance was in less demand. Instead it seems to be increasing as MGMT steps up their attack on the ill and injured workforce.

I would also like to thank Troy Rorman, our Maintenance Craft NBA and everyone in his office who helped put together the CD for Light Duty, Limited Duty and OWCP. Troy brought these CDs to the Educational Convention to share with us. Any Local President who didn't have someone in the OWCP class that received one, please contact me and I will send you one. **Knowledge is Power- Use It and Share It.**

With a thank you being said there is one thing I would like to ask of you. I would ask that if you need to call me at my home, which is the best place to try and reach me, call during the following hours: Monday thru Friday, 8 AM - 6PM. There will be many times when I'll call someone outside these hours to return your call or update you. I'm just asking you to limit when you call me.

I would like to apologize for the length of this article. There is just so much going on and we need to stay on top of all of it. In closing I would like to ask each of you to step up and contribute to COPA. We must all contribute to save our jobs and we must all join in the battle to save our jobs.

### **Injury Compensation Report Continued**

*(Continued from page 14)*

Just one more thing and I'm out of here until next time. Everyone who has a computer should check out our web site at [www.mpwu.com](http://www.mpwu.com). Lots of good stuff, check it out.

May all your grievances be winners and your claims accepted.

In Union Solidarity

*Ron*

### **Legislative Update Continued**

*(Continued from page 4)*

#### **Preparation**

**Plan Ahead.** If possible, make an appointment to speak with your legislator a week or two in advance. If that is not possible, you still may be able to see your legislator. The best way is to go to the House or Senate Chamber while they are in session and send in a note asking your legislator to come out and speak with you for a moment. They usually will if they are not busy voting.

**Ask your legislator to meet with you or your group at the union hall.** On your home turf, you can have his or her undivided attention and exercise better control over both the agenda and the flow of discussion.

**Know the Legislator.** Familiarize yourself with his or her background and voting record by contact the Legislative Department of the Michigan State AFL-CIO prior to your meeting.

**Do your homework.** You don't have to be an expert on the issue, but you do have to know it well enough to explain it intelligently. Be aware of the status of the bill in the legislative process – the bill number, to what committee it has been referred, which groups are supporting it, etc.

**Familiarize yourself with your opponent's arguments** against your position and develop reasonable responses to them.

**Try to personalize the issue.** Give examples of how the issue has or will affect you or your co-workers.

#### **Precision.**

**Never keep a legislator waiting.** Their time is as important as yours. Plan on arriving at your scheduled appointment at least five minutes early.

**Begin your meeting, if possible, in an area of mutual agreement.** Start off by thanking the legislator for a recent vote, Sponsorship of another bill, or for his/her voting record in the last legislative session.

**Try to get right to the point.** Be cordial but remember your time is limited. Don't let a legislator sidetrack you from the issues you want to discuss.

**Ask the legislator for and make sure you get a specific commitment to a specific course of action** – a vote for or against a bill, to introduce legislation, to co-sponsor a bill, to lobby another legislator, etc. Make sure you hear what was actually said, not what you want to hear. Failure to do this may get you nothing more than meaningless political platitudes or proclamations that will not translate into the desired legislative action by the lawmaker.

**Try to address no more than one or two issues** when meeting one-on-one; otherwise, you may set yourself up for a trade-off with each person addressing a separate issue.

**Maintain your credibility.** Never speculate, generalize or guess. If you are unsure of the answer to a legislator's question, offer to follow-up with a written response.

**Never take anything for granted.** Don't count your legislator's support based on last year's performance. Make sure that the lawmaker is with you this year.

#### **Professionalism**

**Greet the legislator with a firm handshake.** Clearly introduce yourself and/or your delegation/union. Exchange only the briefest of pleasantries and get down to business.

**Project an image of self-confidence.** Be assertive in your delivery, remembering you are representing the collective interest of the members of your union.

**Discuss issues without lecturing.** Keep in mind that your position on an issue isn't the only one being lobbied. Therefore allow time for genuine give and take between you and the legislator.

**Don't take rejection personally.** There will be times when a legislator can't support your position. But remember there are other legislative battles ahead.

**Don't hold a grudge.** If a legislator turns you down or fails to stand by a commitment, don't hesitate to express your disappointment. Let the legislator know in a non-belligerent way that your membership will be informed.

*(Continued on page 16)*



## **Politeness**

**Be cordial** – never scold or preach. Lobbying is an information giving and gathering process, so don't act as a judge or grand jury.

**Know when to back off.** If the legislator is hostile, nothing will be gained by becoming argumentative. In this situation, it is best to move on to the next issue or simply thank him or her for their time and excuse yourself.

**Be tolerant of the legislator's viewpoint.** That doesn't mean you have to roll over and play dead. Rather, understand that there are many forces at work in the legislative process and there will be legitimate difference of opinion on every bill.

**Never threaten a legislator with retaliation,** because you may not be able to make good on a political threat. Worse, it may terminate your access and that of other labor lobbyists to a legislator who might have been an ally on another issue. So, Don't – under any circumstances – burn your political bridges.

## **Perseverance**

**Follow-up is crucial in the lobbying process.** Sometimes you won't get an immediate commitment from a legislator at your lobbying encounter. How thoroughly you follow up that meeting with additional correspondence, facts or figures may help determine the final position of that legislator.

**Keep the pressure on.** One of the most effective ways of convincing a reluctant legislator is to organize constituent letter-writing, "lobby day" rallies, call-in or postcard campaigns asking the legislator to support your point of view.

**Remember that compromise is part of the legislative process.** Know when it's necessary to compromise and how much to sacrifice, while still achieving some measure of legislative progress.

## **To Help You Lobby**

The Michigan AFL-CIO has several resources that can provide useful information to help with your lobbying efforts. We can provide you with Legislative Directories, Legislative Fact Sheets, Goals for State Government and the *Michigan State AFL-CIO News*. All of these publications are available on our website, [www.miaflcio.org](http://www.miaflcio.org). Printed copies can be obtained by contacting the Michigan State AFL-CIO's Legislative Department.

Tips on writing your Legislator

Legislators are making decision every day which affect union members and their families...decisions on inflation, taxes, energy, education, transportation, fair wages, consumer and environmental protection.

Legislators are hearing from the Chamber of Commerce, bankers, corporations and other special interest groups who don't have your best interest in mind.

Legislators respond much better to workers' concerns when they know that you care about their voting records all the time, not just during an election year. The best way to let them know you care is by writing. You elected them, so you should tell them what you think. Send them a message. Then the next time they vote, they can't say they didn't hear from the workers.

The following tips can help you write more effective letters to your legislators.

## **Address It Properly**

Your legislators can be contact at the following address:

STATE SENATOR  
The Honorable (full name)  
State Senator  
State Capitol  
PO Box 30036  
Lansing, MI 48909-7536

Address the Letter as: Dear Senator (last name)

STATE REPRESENTATIVE  
The Honorable (full name)  
State Representative  
State Capitol  
PO Box 30014  
Lansing, MI 48909-7514

Address the Letter as: Dear Representative (last name)

## **Identify yourself.**

Make sure you mention your local union affiliation and include your name and address on the letter. A letter cannot be answered if there is no return address or the signature is not legible.

## **Be specific.**

When writing about legislation, use the bill number or the title if you know them. If not, briefly describe the issue that concerns you.

(Continued on page 17)

### Legislative Update Continued

(Continued from page 16)

#### **Be timely.**

Write to your legislator while there is still time to take effective action. A letter that arrives after a vote has already been cast will not do any good.

#### **Explain your position.**

One thoughtful, factual, and well-reasoned letter carries more weight than 100 form letters or printed postcards. As a worker, say in your own words how the bill or amendment will affect you. Don't forget that a bill can change as it moves through the legislative process. So urge your legislator to oppose crippling amendments or support strengthening ones.

#### **Be brief.**

Write about one bill or issue at a time. Don't drag on or write a laundry list of legislative problems. A one-page letter will surely be read and is always the most effective.

#### **Ask for a response.**

Urge your legislator to take a specific action - support or oppose a bill, cosponsor an amendment or whatever action you would like taken. Request a reply to your letter. This information will be helpful to the lobbying efforts of the Michigan AFL-CIO. If possible, please send us a copy of your letter along with any response received from your legislator.

Once you've taken the time to write a letter - don't forget to mail it right away. Remember that the timeliness of your communication is as important as what you've written.

Until next time,

*Cynthia*

### Maintenance Memo Continued

(Continued from page 4)

mation for maintenance specific issues/situations.

I look forward to meeting you at the District meetings and other functions during the coming year. My phone and email are on the MPWU website. Feel free to call on me if I can help you in any way.

In solidarity,

*Jane*

### Retiree Involvement Continued

(Continued from page 6)

rebate to their home Local Retiree chapter."

On good authority, I received word that there was reluctance to implement because of concerns expressed by certain warm weather state local Retiree Chapters with a large contingent of "snowbird" retirees. This amendment would somehow lead to an exodus of retired members and their dues rebates to their home Local Retiree chapters. C'mon! This amendment is NOT "about the money"; it is about a retired member's OPTION! With barely 30 Retiree chapters organized APWU-wide, that concern is highly unlikely.

Delegates in attendance at the Retirees Department conference held prior to the 2002 Convention in Minneapolis discussed this issue thoroughly with Tunstall and J.R. Smith. Tunstall professed "enlightenment," indicating he would follow up on resolving the issue. After several more months of silence, I called Tunstall who referred me to Special Assistant Gary Parrish. Both assured me that option to allow retired members to assign their chapter membership could, and would be done, as if this was going to "salve" me. In turn, I stressed to both that this revelation to implement does not negate the fact that this is a duly adopted amendment to the APWU Constitution.

That exchange was followed with yet another formal written request that the amendment be properly inserted into Article 16, Section 1, dated 11-7-02, to which I have yet to receive a reply. I patiently waited for the 2002 amended version of the constitution to be published to confirm whether or not this blatant omission continues. It does, and I have once again written a formal letter to Sec. Tunstall requesting correction post haste, as I consider this omitted amendment to be a violation of Article 22, Section 1 of our governing document. Pardon me if I don't buy into the "inadvertent" explanation after having given APWU Headquarters the benefit of doubt. I didn't fall of the turnip truck yesterday.

While I consider the omission of a duly adopted amendment to the APWU constitution very serious, indeed, the stonewalling by the APWU leadership clearly demonstrates what we have experience throughout the struggle to structure the Retirees Department. It is a classic example of the proven fact that as long as retired members are denied a voice and vote in selecting our leadership, they have no incentive to either listen or respond to us. Discouraging? Frustrating? You bet! Yet, I am just stubborn and naïve enough to hold out hope that the active Local and State leadership in the field, and delegates to the 2004 National Convention will see the justice in directing "Retiree Inclusion" in the APWU.

Another thing...about this three-day APWU "Traveling Show" going to each of our five Regions featuring seminar on

(Continued on page 18)

### Retiree Involvement Continued

(Continued from page 17)

Retirement counseling, Human Relations, and "How to Build a Local Union." No question, both Retiree Department Director John R. Smith and Human Relations Director Sue Carney do and have done a superb job of instruction. While I can not comment on the class "How to Build a Local Union" instructed by Ohio APWU State President Terry Grant, and APWU PPA President Tony Carobine, as I only stepped in at the Central Region Seminar for a quick minute, scuttlebutt has it that this program is funded out of the budgets of the Retirees Department and Human Relations Department. So? After some analysis, promoted by discussions with other retiree leaders in the field, two questions arise:

First, it has long been retiree contention in the field that the Retirement Counseling Seminar, while excellent, does not apply to, or benefit whatsoever, APWU Retiree Department members who pay the freight. At best, its sole value is to train Chapter officers in responding to active member inquiries. I am advised that the Retiree State Chapter Officers at Mackinac Island were able to expand upon points of instruction based on their own retirement experiences. Since Retirement Counseling seminars benefit ONLY active members contemplating retirement, why should it be charged to our Retiree Department budget and not to the General Fund?

Now here are a couple of novel ideas. The first having been offered by State Chapter Sec.-Treas Jerry Clairmont. How about sponsoring and budgeting retiree seminars on: "What to do in the event of an Annuitant's Death," or another: "Wills and Trusts." Organizing pertinent documents and instructions should you predecease your spouse and surviving beneficiaries? That would be directly beneficial to the dues-paying Retirees Department membership. As for Retirees Department budget shouldering half the cost for the "How to Build a Local Union," I would have less a problem if the instruction included: "How to Build a Local Retirees Chapter." These are issues in dire need of addressing in an open forum atmosphere of a Retirees Department Conference!

Secondly, how is this for a revolutionary idea? Regarding APWU President Burrus' "Call for Action" in the 4-30-03 News Service Bulletin proposing to develop community opposition to recommendations for postal "reform" and calling for Local and State Unions to form "Local coalitions to coordinate letter-writing campaigns, medial contacts, and legislative activity. H-E-L-L-O!! "Action kits" have been distributed to every Local and State President. Great Strategy! Are the retired members invisible? APWU Retirees Department membership is estimated to be 34,000. There are 30+ Local and State Retiree Chapters. Is everyone to close to the tree to see the forest? Retirees are ready resource for our parent Union to mobilize. Consider how many retired past officers and stewards in the retiree ranks with the experience and knowledge to make a real impact.

Is it too much to expect that our national union, parent local and state unions reach out to us and provide retired members and Chapters the ammo to work with? Anyone listening?

Does Anyone Care?

One of the first pieces of mail I opened after five days in the hospital was a card a heartwarming note from a Brother in Tustin, Michigan, responding to my question in the previous R.I. column. His response was uplifting at a welcomed time. The Brother CARES! The other response came from a Flint Area Local active member who also cares and whose message was equally uplifting. Yup, just two. While the silent majority kind of speaks for itself, I am going to hang around long enough to see what the 2004 National Convention brings.

CONGRADULATIONS AND WARMEST WISHES, BROTHER! Always the last to know! I was completely taken by surprise by MPWU President, Gary VanHoogstraten's retirement announced at the Educational Convention. Now, you can join us old geezers lamenting how long it is between paydays! Although Gary will remain a full dues-paying member of the APWU, he is eligible to join us as a member of the APWU Retirees Department. Enjoy, Brother!

Be Strong

*Al*



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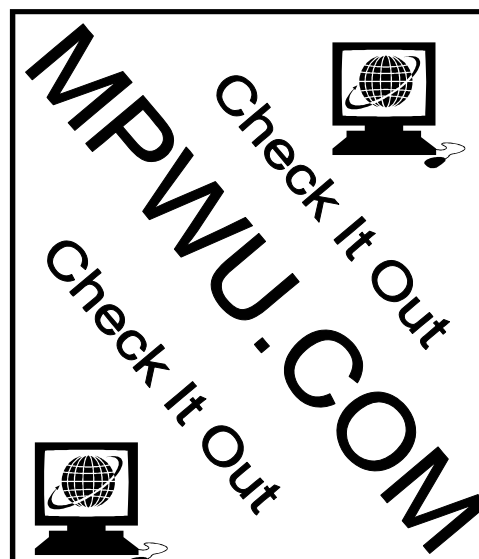


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*Your articles are welcome! They must be signed to be printed, but your name will be withheld upon request. Articles sent via electronic media will be treated as being signed. Be aware that articles may be edited to fit the confines of this publication.*

*In addition, this paper is designed with everyone in mind, please be aware that all mistakes are intentional for the express purpose of keeping those happy that are most happy when finding errors in others.*



## **Upcoming Events to Plan For:**

*July 30 - August 2, 2003 - Milwaukee, WI, National PPA Convention*

*September 2003 - Gaylord, MI, District Meeting*

*October 27 - 29, 2003 - Rivera Hotel, Las Vegas, NV - Clerk Craft Conference*

*February 20 - 21, 2004 - Grand Rapids, Michigan, District Meeting*

*May 2004 - Lansing, Michigan - Constitutional Convention*

It is with great sadness that I report the loss of one of our own. Former MPWU Special Delivery Messenger Director, James C. Sweeney, died of a massive coronary at his home in Grand Rapids, Michigan on Sunday, May 25, 2003. He was 42 years old.

As the MPWU Director of Special Delivery during the transition and merger of the Special Delivery into the clerk craft, Jim was instrumental in ensuring all aspects of the merger followed. He ensured that any violations were grieved immediately. His memorandum were rectified and his unionism in this area was unmatched by National for his input and know-how.



After the merger of every craft into the clerk craft, Jim didn't stop there. He took it upon himself to learn Retirement Counseling and became a National trainer and shared this information with many. During the recent Central Region Human Relations Conference and MPWU Educational Convention, Jim was called upon to help instruct and facilitate both classes.

Prior to his death, he was serving as Recording Secretary on the Executive Board of the Western Michigan Area Local.

On behalf of the Executive Board of the Michigan Postal Workers Union, our hearts and prayers go out to the family of our brother.

**THE DEADLINE FOR  
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**- INSIDE THIS ISSUE OF THE MICHIGAN MESSENGER -**

President's Report – Gary VanHoogstraten	Page 1
Secretary's Writings - Harold Juhl	Page 2
Education at Work – Lynn Pallas-Barber	Page 2
Long and Short of It – Michael Long	Page 3
Injury Comp Report– Ron Krumrie	Page 3
Legislative Reports - Cynthia Hardison	Page 4
Maintenance Memo - Jane Duggan	Page 4
Area 6 Report - Mary Stephenson	Page 5
Area 9 Report - Jennifer Gilbert	Page 5
Retiree Involvement – Al LaBrecque	Page 6
Are You Paying Too Much for Your Cell Phone?	Page 6
Sample Letter to Legislators	Page 7
Pictures of Central Region Human Relations Conf.	Page 7
Pictures from the 2003 Educational Convention	Page 15
Officers and Executive Board Members	Page 19
Upcoming Events	Page 19
Inside the Michigan Messenger / Index	Page 20

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